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Zhukov, in Book Sold to British, Depicts Stalin at Potsdam Talk

By HENRY RAYMONT

Stalin, who reacted with apparent indifference when President Truman informed him at the Potsdam Conference in July, 1945, that the United States possessed a new weapon of fearful power, was in fact attempting to conceal the Soviet Union's own atomic bomb program, according to a commander of Soviet armed forces in World War II.

The account of Stalin's response is contained in the unpublished memoirs of Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov, the commander, who accompanied Stalin to Potsdam two weeks before the first American nuclear weapon was dropped on Hiroshima.

Marshal Zhukov's version, which became available to The New York Times yesterday, suggests that Stalin was aware of the implications of Mr. Truman's report and ordered the Soviet nuclear research program to be accelerated.

A Soviet physicist who worked in the program, Dr. Igor N. Golovin, disclosed in a history of the project published in 1966 that it had been accelerated after the United States had exploded its first bomb on July 16, 1945, near Alamogordo, N.M.

Mr. Truman said in his memoirs that "the Russian Premier showed no special interest," and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill wrote, later, "I was sure he [Stalin] had no idea of the significance of what he was being told."

Marshal Zhukov indicates that the Soviet leader deliberately appeared indifferent in an effort to conceal the Soviet Union's own research on the atomic bomb.

Stalin Urges Speed-up

According to Marshal Zhukov, Stalin drew him and Vyacheslav M. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, aside after the conversation with President Truman and declared: "They simply want to raise the price. We've got to work on Kurchatov and hurry things up."

This was a reference to Dr. Igor Kurchatov, a nuclear physicist who was in charge of atomic bomb development. The Soviet Union exploded its first bomb in September, 1949.

World book and magazine serialization rights to the 280,000-word memoirs of Marshal Zhukov last month by James MacGibbon, managing director of

the British publishing house Macdonald and Co., Ltd. Mr. MacGibbon said in London he bought the rights for "a six-figure dollar sum" in an unusual arrangement with Novosti Press Agency, the Soviet feature syndicate.

Novosti has agreed to let Macdonald publish the book in its Russian version in London to establish copyright and has said that the Soviet Union would issue the book in Russian only after the English translation is published next year.

Since the Soviet Union is not a member of the Berne Copyright Convention, its books normally pass into the public domain and are available to anyone to translate.

Under the agreement between Novosti and Macdonald, Marshal Zhukov, who is 72 years old, will add some passages for the English-language version, which is being translated by Prof. John Erickson, a military historian at Edinburgh University.

Macdonald has offered the American book rights to several United States publishing houses through its representative here, Mrs. Rhoda Weyr, a literary agent. It is reported to have stipulated a minimum price of \$200,000.

Earlier efforts by Novosti to sell the book directly to publishers in the United States were unsuccessful. Publishing sources said the Soviet agency had asked \$1.5-million to \$2-million.

Reached at his home in Edinburgh yesterday, Professor Erickson said Marshal Zhukov's book begins with his childhood in Moscow, tracing his quick rise in the Red Army through the border encounters against Japan, the crucial battle of Leningrad, and the defense of Moscow.

The book ends with the post-war conferences and does not deal with the marshal's demotion by Stalin in 1949, his return after Stalin's death to become Defense Minister in 1955, his dismissal in 1957 by Nikita S. Khrushchev and his rehabilitation under the present leadership.

Professor Erickson said that the memoirs, except for a small part dealing with the defense of Moscow, have not appeared before and that an essay published by the marshal in 1965 to counter charges that he had unnecessarily delayed the capture of Berlin has been in a caustic style as part of the new book.

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